equipments to the forces for checking infiltration and other subversive activities. Policing on the Indo-Nepal border has been intensified and strengthened. Instructions have also been issued to all the enforcement agencies to maintain utmost vigil and step up enforcement efforts under the strigent provisions contained in NDPS Act. Training is being imparted to officers to improve their effectiveness.

India earns the title of soft state

1440. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that by releasing the three terrorists to end the hijacking crisis and allowing safe passage to the hijackers, the national security has thus been affected not only in Kashmir but also all over India as it would now been seen as a soft State not only by ISI and muslim terrorists, but also by all terrorist elements in the country especially in the North-East; and

(b) if s*o,* what extra precautionary measures Government have taken in North-East Region, Indo-Nepal Border areas, Indo-Bangladesh border areas and so on?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI I.D. SWAMI): (a) In handling the situation arising out of the hijacking of IC-814, Government set itself three objectives (i) the earliest termination of the hijacking; (ii) the safe return of passengers, crew and aircraft; and (iii) preservation of national security. The matter in which the termination of the hijacking was ensured, met the priorities that Government had set itself. The hijacking of IC-814 has only made Governments resolve stronger to combat the menace of terrorism.

(b) Government have adopted a multipronged approach comprising deployment of Central Para Military Forces, setting up of Border Observation Posts, erection of fencing/flood lighting in vulnerable areas along the Indo-Pak and Indo-Bangladesh borders

and provision of specialised equipments like night vision devices to the forces for greater vigilance along the International Borders of the country to check infiltration and other subversive activities. Neighbouring countries viz; Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan have been sensitised on our security concerns and coordination mechanism have been established for exchange of intelligence and for initiating action against subversive elements.

Hijacking episode

1441. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the bargain ultimately struck with the hijackers of Indian Airlines Flight IC-814 went against the spirit of the declaration adopted at the all parties meeting held on December 27, 1999 to discuss the hijacking issue;

(b) if not, how Government let the initiative pass into the hands of the hijackers by allowing the plane to take off from Amritsar; and

(c) whether the release of Maulana Masood Azhar, Mustaq Zargar and Syed Ahmed Umar Sheikh, represents a surrender by the Indian Government in its fight against extremism in Kashmir Valley?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI I.D. SWAMI): (a) In handling the situation arising from the hijacking, Government set itself three clear priorities; (i) the early termination of the hijacking; (ii) the safe return of the passengers, crew and aircraft; and (iii) safeguarding national security. The manner in which the termination of the hijacking was secured met the priorities Government had set out.

(b) When the aircraft landed at Amritsar, concrete and sepcific information in respect of the numbers, nationality, weaponry, professionalism and commitment of the hijacker was scanty and speculative. On the other hand, messages being received from the